



The Diverse Linguistic Impact on Assamese: An Indo -Aryan Language

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Abstract: This study aims at studying various languages' impact on Assamese language over the period of history. The language families viz. Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian and Tai-Kadai prevailing in Assam make the land a multilingual one. Other ethnic groups found on the state are Tai-Phake, Tai-Aiton and Tai-Khamti. Different tribes (plain and hill tribes) in Assam bear examples of different languages and cultures. Similarities are found between Assamese and other non-Aryan customs. A language develops from interactions that take place between certain speech communities. Assamese food habits, festivals and other cultural aspects have been greatly influenced. As a result, a lot of lexical items as well as other linguistic features are amalgamated with Assamese language. Assam is a great example of diverse lingua-cultural state where each language has made an impact on one another's vocabularies.

Keywords - Indo-Aryan, Assamese, impact, diverse, vocabularies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The North-Eastern region of India is known by its diversity in language and culture. The religious varieties found in Assam are Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity along with many other tribal religions. Assamese language occupies the official status in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. Other official languages in the state are Bengali in the Surma/Barak valley and Bodo in the BTAD areas of Assam. Assamese culture has turned composite resulting from the invasion or migration that has taken place in the land over different periods of history. At different times, the land of Assam was ruled by the *Ahoms*, the *Koches*, the *Chutiyas*, the *Bodo-Kacharis*, the *Morans* and the *Borahis*, of Mongoloid or Indo-Mongoloid stock. The Aryans migrated to India in 1500 BCE. But one cannot deny the Non-Aryan lingua-cultural impact as well on the land of Assam. Assam is one of the most diverse states of India where multiple casts and tribes with different language varieties gradually made an influence on one another. A large number of Ahom words and Perso-Arabic vocabularies entered into Assamese language as a result of language contact with the Muslims. Moreover, the Tibeto-Burman and Austro-Asiatic lingua-cultural influence are also noticeable on the land.

2. A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE TAI-AHOM IMPACT ON ASSAMESE:

The Ahoms were a group of people speaking the Tai-Ahom language. Although it got endangered resulting from the close contact with Assamese inhabitants, their influence is observed in few Assamese words. One of the most striking impacts on Assamese language by the Ahoms was its phonology. The phonemes of Assamese language saw a certain change in its intonation and articulation. Like other Pan-Magadhan languages, early Assamese language owned both dental and retroflex sounds. But due to the influence of Tai-Ahom language, Assamese has lost both the consonants are now realised as alveolar consonants. In Modern Assamese language, dental and retroflex sounds only exist in writings or orthography.

Ahom words that entered in Assamese language are as follows:

- a) **Ahom words used in Assamese:** *khang* ‘a wicket basket’, *phau* ‘nothing’, *pung* ‘water hole’, *dong* ‘puddle’, *tonga* ‘wallet’, *kareng* ‘a place with arisen platform’, *a-kora* ‘to open the mouth’, *kokai* ‘elder brother’, *khilonziya* ‘desi’, *phang phung* ‘to betray’, *hengdang* ‘an equipment’, *ban* ‘a kind of plate’, *ban* ‘a kind of bowl’, etc.
- b) **Assamese surnames of Ahom origin:** *Khunbao*, *Phukan*, *Cangmai*, *Caodang*, *Barua*, etc.
- c) **Words of Ahom origin used for naming sons in serial number:** *lai* ‘eldest’, *main* ‘first’, *langi* ‘second’, *lacam* ‘third’, *langu* ‘fifth’, *lacai* ‘fourth’, *lacid* ‘seventh’, *lappet* ‘eighth’
- d) **Other words from Ahom:** *ban kek* from *bang kek*, *baruk* from *ban ruk*, *lahan* from *lan han*, *laluk* from *la ruk*, etc.
- e) **Hybrids:** *bar barua*, *bar phukan*, *bar cau*, *lai khuta*, *barmi cau*, *dam puja*, etc.
- f) **River Names:** *namcang*, *namsum*, *namdang*, *namrup*, etc. since Tai-Ahom river names were started with *namat* that time.
- g) **Place Names:** Place names were started with *ti* and some of the Assamese place names of Ahom origin are: *tipam*, *tiyok*, *tingrai*, *tingkhong*, etc.
- h) **Names of cities:** In Ahom or Tai language the term *se* stood for city. Present day Gargaon was known as *se-hung* and Rangpur was known as *se-mun*. Similarly, *se-rai-doy* turned ‘*soraideu*’, *sorgua* was known as *se-re-gua*.
- i) **Kinship terms:** *pu-thao* ‘father of mother’, *a-nai* or *enai* ‘mother of mother’, *ni-sao* uncle, *a-pa* ‘aunt’, *a-thao* or *me-thao* ‘grandmother’, etc.

3. THE TIBETO- BURMAN IMPACT ON ASSAMESE:

Tibeto-Burman tribes found in Assamese are: Bodo, Karbi, Dimasa, Rabha, Tiwa, Mising, Deuri, etc. All these tribes have significantly contributed to the development of Assamese vocabulary and culture as well.

3.1 Similarities Between Assamese and Dimasa:

- a) **Similarities in the names of fishing implements:**
Assamese (*zakoi*) = Dimasa (*zekhai*), Assamese (*sepa*) = Dimasa (*sepha*), Assamese (*nora*) = Dimasa (*nerau*), etc.
- b) **Other Similarities:**
Assamese (*xizu*) = Dimasa (*si-guz*), Assamese (*robab*) = Dimasa (*reba*), Assamese (*lofa*) = Dimasa (*langph*)

3.2 Similarities Between Bodo and Assamese:

- a) **Similarities in the names of fishing implements:**
Assamese (*zakoi*) = Bodo (*zekhai*), Assamese (*khoka*) = Bodo (*khokha*), etc.
- b) **Other Similarities:**
Assamese (*zaha*) = Bodo (*zwsa*) ‘a kind of rice’, Assamese (*lofa*) = Bodo (*loifang*) ‘a kind of leafy vegetable’, etc.

4. AUSTRAL-ASIATIC IMPACT ON ASSAMESE:

Although, the Khasis are Mongoloid, linguistically they are Austro-Asiatic. Khasi, the official language of Meghalaya is also spoken in Cachar, Nowgong, Lakhimpur and Kamrup districts of Assam. The closeness found between the words of Khasi and Assamese are: Assamese (*kingkhap*) = Khasi (*kemkhap*) ‘a kind of fabric’, Assamese (*zaha*) = Khasi (*zuhai*) ‘a kind of rice’, Assamese (*zanzal*) = Khasi (*zinzar*) ‘problematic’, Assamese /khɔŋ/ = Khasi (khɔŋ khɔŋ) ‘anger’, etc.

5. SEMITIC OR PERSO-ARABIC IMPACT ON ASSAMESE:

The Muslims invaded Assam in 1527 but were defeated and imprisoned by the Assamese in the battle. Assamese language is impacted by the Arabic or Perso-Arabic words entered into Assamese vocabulary. Since Persian was the court language of Assam at that time, Perso-Arabic words could highly influence Assamese language. The Arabic words that became a part of Assamese language are as follows:

- a) **Arabic words used by Assamese Muslims:** *zannat* from *zannat* 'heaven', *kobul* from *qubul* 'agree', *salam* from *salam* 'greetings', etc.
- b) **Assamese words of Arabic origin:** *kayda* from *quida* 'rule', *hazir* from *hazir* 'present', *hukum* from *hukm* 'order', *asol* from *asl* 'real', *san* from *sanah* 'year', *zarip* from *zarib* 'land measurement', etc.
- c) **Political words:** *kanun* from *qanun* 'law', *ujir* from *wazir* 'minister', etc.
- d) **Postal words:** *khabar* from *khabr* 'news', *lephapha* from *lifafah* 'envelope', etc.
- e) **Terms of Profession:** *hakim* from *hakim* 'judge', *dalal* from *dalal* 'broker', *ukil* from *wakil* 'advocate', etc.
- f) **Judicial Words:** *adalat* from *adalat* 'court', *mukaddama* from *mukaddamah* 'case', etc.
- g) **Educational:** *kalam* from *qalam* 'pen', *kitab* from *kitab* 'book', etc.
- h) **Food vocabularies:** *korma*, *kabab*, *pulao*, etc.

6. CONCLUSION:

The people of Assam are to be known as the amalgamation of various Aryan and Non-Aryan groups who has immensely contributed to the land of Assam both culturally and linguistically. The non-Aryan groups impacted on Assam are: Austric, Mongoloid, Dravidian and Tibeto-Burman. The Ahoms impacted on Assamese lives as a result of the language contact happened with the Assamese for their survival. The Ahoms were succeeded as the great rulers of Assam in the Ahom history. Eventually they became a part of their culture through marrying Assamese girls, adopting Assamese language as their own and therefore, we observe their remarkable influence in Assamese language. Arabic linguistic impact is observed on Assamese language via Muhammadan invaders. Although Persian is an Aryan language, but Arabic which is a Semitic language is highly reflected on Assamese language. Persian that was served as the court language of Assam, a large number of Persian words that are of Arabic origin became a part of Assamese vocabulary. Assamese Muslims are the second largest Assamese community after Hinduism and they are classified as Garia, Mariya and Desi people. The large number of loanwords found in Assamese language are the examples that Assam is linguistically influenced by various ethnic groups.

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